

# Forging Our Bonds

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Summary: Family isn't just blood â€" it's found connections and chosen bonds that last a lifetime. In the Institute, the New Recruits find a family with each other, one that can overcome any obstacle. A series of connected snapshots and oneshots. Pairings found within.

## 1. Welcome to the Institute

**\*\*Summary:** \*\*Family isn't just blood â€" it's found connections and chosen bonds that last a lifetime. In the Institute, the New Recruits find a family with each other, one that can overcome any obstacle. A series of connected snapshots and oneshots.

**\*\*Ships:\*\*** \_Ray/Sam, Bobby/Jubilee, Tabitha/Amara, Roberto/Rahne later on, canon ships.\_

**\*\*Author's Note:\*\*** Inspired by \_Tales From the Kiddie Table\_, I present to you, some oneshots about the New Recruits. The ships are listed above. All author's notes will be at the end after this chapter. Summaries for each chapter will be located below the title.

If you like it, please leave a review!

**\*\*One: Welcome to the Institute\*\***

\_The Institute is warm, friendly, but it's not home. He doesn't belong here. And Ray is aching, painfully, aware of that.\_

The first day at the Institute went about as well as Ray thought it would. Someone â€" Ms. Munroe, probably â€" bought him sandals before bringing him to the place. They made him clean his hair and his teeth, something he hadn't always had the luxury of doing.

He couldn't help but feel like a show pony. Or like some kind of act. "Look at us, we cleaned up the street rat," they'd say to each other before patting themselves on the back. "Aren't we so nice to do this for him?"

The thought made his stomach churn. Words echoed around in his head â€" \_worthless, charity case, street rat\_ â€" until they blocked out his own thoughts and made him snarl into his (too soft, too fluffy, too new) pillow.

Ray was bitter. That much he couldn't help. He was bitter that he wasn't "good enough" to be in the Institute without an hour of prep work. He was bitter that Callisto and Caliborn had basically tossed him out of the sewers and told him not to come back.

That bitterness, sharp and harsh on his tongue, left his mouth cotton dry and his head pounding rhythmically with the too-fast beating of his heart.

With a sigh, Ray turned his head to see his roommate â€" Sam, the twangy farm boy â€" fast asleep in his own bed. His soft sleep snuffling was soothing, despite Ray's frustration.

But he couldn't sleep.

So he clambered out of bed, yanked his jeans on over his boxers and stumbled out of the bedroom. He padded down the halls in silence, not bothering with the lights. Between the full moon outside and his adaption to dark environments over the last two years, it wasn't that hard for him to manoeuvre through the darkness, around the various side tables, and down to the kitchen.

The lights flickered on, dim but there, as Ray entered the kitchen, his body already keying into the building to make the lights obey his every command. There was a thrill in it â€" in hunting through the circuits and figuring out which one did what thing. There was a secondary power supply in the house â€" one that seemed hooked into a sub-basement â€" and Ray had to wonder what that was all about.

He opened the door to the fridge and snagged a water bottle, downing half of it in one go. There was a tin of cookies on the counter with a cheery "share please!" note in swirling green handwriting. He figured it was probably Jean. The other X-Men didn't strike him as bakers. Ms. Munroe probably was, but she seemed more like a pale blue or purple kind of lady, not a green one.

He grabbed two cookies, they appeared to be chocolate chip, and tucked himself into the window seat of the kitchenette area. The sky was clear tonight, and this far out of Bayview, there were plenty of stars. Ray let his eyes trace the constellations. Callisto's voice was in his ear, whispering their names as they waited for the police to pass. Their sirens swirling on the streets, four storeys below.

With a blink, Ray found himself back in the window seat, the memories fading from his vision. He sighed, soft, and his breath fogged the window for a moment. It faded, the summer warmth lingering outside despite cool night, and he did it again. This time he let his finger trace the fog before it faded again.

It was almost two in the morning. He needed sleep. But sleep wouldn't come " not easily and not tonight. The Institute was too new. The pain of abandonment was too fresh. And everything " from the frustration that slowly leaked from him into the cool glass of the window, to the quiet anxiety that took its place " was too sharp around the edges.

Like lightning, Ray thought. Striking hard and harshly and leaving only burn marks and afterimages behind. He rolled one of the half-eaten cookies over his fingers, feeling the electricity that prickled them.

He wanted to go outside. To strike out into the night and vanish. The Professor would find him. Ray'd figured out one of the power sources in the house led to some kind of weird machine and, based on the earlier conversations he'd overheard, it was some kind of mutant tracking device.

Whatever. At least he'd have a few days of peace.

The kitchen door swung open and one of the X-Men walked in. Short dark guy with blond hair. Ray couldn't place his name. Found he didn't much care.

"Hey, Ray, right?" said the guy. His voice was soft, but it still broke the silence, and that put Ray on edge for no reason other than years of muscle memory. Of memories of voices in the night that shouldn't have been there.

"Yeah," said Ray. He went back to staring out the window.

A moment of blissful silence, broken again by the guy's question. "Where did you find cookies?"

"Cookie tin," said Ray. He didn't look at the guy. There was the telltale noise of the tin being opened and closed, and then the guy was standing across from Ray, his head tilted to one side and a cookie in each hand.

"You all right, man?" asked the guy.

"Fine," said Ray. He wanted to be alone. He wasn't sure if he was allowed to be. This place seemed kind of weird about leaving people alone. Too many people crammed together despite the extra space. Ray wondered if that was by design " driving them into the same space until they were forced to become friends. Or enemies, perhaps.

There were two telepaths in the house. They'd probably be mad if they could read his thoughts. But they couldn't. Ray had noticed that when he'd met the professor, and before, in the sewers, as well. His mind was static to telepaths. Static and pain, if you dug too deep.

"I know the first night's always the hardest, especially if you're a city kid," said the guy.

Ray raised an eyebrow at him. "City kid," he echoed, voice giving away nothing.

The guy shifted so that both cookies were in one hand and rubbed the back of his neck. "Yeah, I mean, we're both New Yorkers, man. Gotta

stick together, right?" He looked sheepish, a little smile on his face and his dark eyes warm, if worried.

Ray caught himself smiling, just as small, if a little less friendly. "Right," said Ray. The guy didn't know his story, didn't need to. But hey, he was trying, and that was more than most of them had done today.

"Anyway, man, try and get some sleep, okay? You guys are getting fitted for the Danger Room tomorrow," said the guy. He waved at Ray, shoved a cookie in his mouth, and disappeared.

Ray raised an eyebrow once the guy was gone. Danger Room? That must have been what the rest of the secondary power supply was for.

Well, thought Ray, maybe this place would be interesting after all. If nothing else, he could stick around for a couple days. It wasn't like he had anywhere else to go.

And just like that, he was bitter again. With a sigh, Ray got to his feet and headed to the living room. Maybe some TV would help.

## 2. Pride

**\*\*Two: Pride\*\***

Tabitha has never been ashamed of who she is, but now she has a chance to show it off. Too bad not everyone takes it well. But then again, sometimes support comes in the strangest of places.\_

Tabitha fiddled with her bracelets as she headed downstairs. The rainbow arranged beads glittered in the lighting of the mansion, shimmering and shaking as she sashayed into the kitchen to grab some breakfast. She plucked a muffin from a plate and an apple from the fruit bowl that was set up on the kitchen island.

"Morning," she said, stuffing the muffin into her mouth.

"Morning," said Roberto, not looking up from his summer studies.

Bobby looked up to smile at her, only for his gaze to catch on the bracelets. "What's with the rainbows?" he asked. That drew the attention of a couple of others in the room.

With a practiced shrug, Tabitha tore off another piece of her muffin and popped it into her mouth. "I like 'em," said Tabitha. "Good for makin' statements."

"Huh," said Bobby.

There was something in his tone that had Tabitha's hackles rising. "What?" she asked, still maintaining her casual tone. "Problem?"

Bobby seemed taken aback at that. "Oh? No, no," he said. He raised his hands in surrender. "Nothing wrong, Tabs, just uh, didn't expect it."

"Really?" asked Roberto, raising an eyebrow. "You didn't expect Tabitha to be aâ€¦" He trailed off. Tabitha knew that look. The look of a person debating their next words.

She gritted her teeth, setting down her apple to clench one fist to her side. Wasn't this place supposed to be accepting? What the hell had happened to that?

"I'm gonna go get ready for training," muttered Tabitha. She left the kitchen, heading back toward the stairs. Kitty nearly bumped into her, and both girls froze to shuffle around each other.

Kitty's eyes found the bracelets and then went wide. "Oh, you'reâ€¦" She trailed off, much like how Roberto had. Tabitha forced herself to smile. \_Why wasn't this allowed?\_

"Yup," said Tabitha, the fake enthusiasm in her voice making Kitty flinch. Kitty took a few steps back, gaze flicking from Tabitha's face to her bracelets. Her lips were pressed into a thin line and the worry in her face didn't fade even as she kept backing up toward the kitchen.

"Later," said Kitty to the floor, and she almost \_fled\_ into the kitchen.

Once she was out of sight, Tabitha yanked off the bracelets and whipped them at the wall. They exploded into a shower of beads, blurred out by the tears in her eyes. She stalked upstairs to the shower.

Whatever. She could deal. It wasn't like she hadn't before.

â€¦She'd just hoped this time would be different.

Two days passed and Tabitha mostly forgot about what she'd done with her bracelet. She didn't forget the reaction â€" who could? â€" but she mostly forgot about what must have happened to the beads.

That didn't stop the reactions of people around her. Kitty, Bobby, and Roberto had apparently let it slip, and now half the institute knew (if not the entire place). Amara was avoiding her, often going to bed long before or long after Tabitha. That hurt. She and Amara were supposed to be friends, roommates, and Amara wouldn't even talk to her.

Then again, she'd grown up conservative, just like Roberto, so maybe she was just trying not to upset Tabitha.

That almost hurt more than the actual rejection, come to think of it.

But Tabitha took it all in stride, that was what she'd been trained to do, after all, and she forced back her frustration and her pain and she plastered on her smile and kept going.

It was the middle of the day on Thursday, just after school had begun â€" and Tabitha having only been in for a half day that day â€" when Logan brought her home from school. She tried the front door as she walked forward and bumped into it.

"It'sâ€| locked?" said Tabitha with a wrinkled brow. In the weeks she'd been at the institute, the door had never been locked during the day.

"Must just be us," said Logan, fishing around in his pockets.

Tabitha clapped her hands together, fingers tingling as she went to form some of her bombs. "I can bust it open."

Logan actually laughed at that, soft and a little amused. Tabitha smiled. "Won't be necessary," said Logan, fishing out his keys.

He jammed them into the lock and swung open the door, and it was only when he went to put them back in his pocket that Tabitha saw the colourful beads hanging from the keychain that caught the light.

"Those are my beads," said Tabitha, staring. Her gaze snapped up to Logan, who had furrowed his brow.

"Are they?" he asked. He stepped into the institute and Tabitha followed. "I just found 'em on the floor a couple days ago. Figured no one wanted 'em." He shrugged. "You want 'em back?"

Tabitha shook her head. "No. The others made it pretty clear what they thought of myâ€| of my pride." She hugged herself, leaning against the door and debating making a break for it. She didn't want to have this conversation with Logan. He wouldn't understand. He was some gruff lumberjack type. All machoism and drinking and sharp words.

"Pride, huh?" echoed Logan. He sighed and dragged a hand over his face. "If the others are giving you trouble, you need to tell us, blondie. We aren't gonna tell you that you're seeing things. We'll deal with it."

Tabitha scowled and hugged herself tighter, hunching her shoulders. "So why wear them?" she asked, trying desperately to change the subject. "To prove a point? No one else has seen them."

Logan sighed. "Kid, just because you're the only one out at the institute, doesn't mean you're the only one who ain't straight." He gave her a flat look. "Myself included."

Tabitha's eyes went wide. "You'reâ€|"

"Bisexual, if you wanna be specific," said Logan, shrugging. "But I keep my professional life â€" which is here â€" and my personal life damn near separated. I'm your teacher, your mentor, before I'm anything else. You don't need to know who I date in my spare time. That ain't your job."

Tabitha nodded, her eyes wide and a little wet. She wasn't alone. "But why not say something?"

"Never had a reason to," said Logan. "But the numbers don't lie, sooner or later, someone at the institute was going to be gay, or bi, or something." He shrugged and stuffed his keys back into his pockets. "That doesn't mean I was gonna say anything first, but now I

think I probably should have." He rubbed his face again. "Look, if it means that much to you, I'll tell 'em all. Shout it from the damn roof if it'll make you stop pouting."

Tabitha laughed, clapping a hand over her mouth.

"And we â€" all the teachers â€" we'll talk to the others. I know Scott's pretty relaxed about this stuff, maybe you should talk to him about the x-kids," said Logan. Tabitha nodded. She could do that.

"Okay," she said.

"And blondie?" said Logan. Tabitha raised an eyebrow at him. "I'm sorry you had to deal with that alone. No one should ever have to feel like that."

Tabitha stepped forward and hugged Logan tight, arms around his shoulders. He tensed for only a second, then wrapped his arms around her, his hands on her back.

"Thank you," she mumbled into his chest.

"You're welcome," said Logan. And if his shirt got a little wet, and Tabitha got a little misty, well. No one else had to know.

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><p><strong>Author's Note:<strong> I always felt like the first person to come out at the Institute would be Tabitha, so here it is. Also, I decided to take a more... diverse? I suppose... reaction to her coming out. Some people like it, some people don't, and Tabitha focuses on the people who don't, because those are easier to spot.

Reviews are love! And greatly appreciated!

End  
file.